

Abandoned Farmhouse by Ted Kooser

Underline the noun that modifies the verb in the main clause.

Choose which verb (say or says) should be used based on the noun.

- A plural noun will take the verb that does not end in 's'
- A singular noun will take the verb that does end in 's'

He was a big man, (say/says) the size of his shoes
On a pile of broken dishes by the house;
A tall man too, (say/says) the length of the bed
In an upstairs room; and a good, God-fearing man,
(Say/Says) the Bible with a broken back
On the floor below a window, bright with sun;
But not a man for farming, (say/says) the fields
Cluttered with boulders and a leaky barn.

A woman lived with him, (say/says) the bedroom wall
Papered with lilacs and the kitchen shelves
Covered with oilcloth, and they had a child
(Say/Says) the sandbox made from a tractor tire.
Money was scarce, (say/says) the jars of plum preserves
And canned tomatoes sealed in the cellar-hole,
And the winters cold, (say/says) the rags in the window-frames.
It was lonely here, (say/says) the narrow country road.

Something went wrong, (say/says) the empty house
In the weed-choked yard. Stones in the fields
(Say/Says) he was not a farmer; the still-sealed jars
In the cellar (say/says) she left in a nervous haste.
And the child? Its toys were strewn in the yard
Like branches after a storm – a rubber cow,
A rusty tractor and a broken plow,
A doll in overalls. Something went wrong, they (say/says).